

# **INFANT DEVELOPMENT**

## **SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

Infants learn about the world through touch, sight, sound, taste, and smell. They learn about relationships from how people touch and hold them, and from the tones of voice and facial expressions people use when caring for them. When babies have their needs met - being fed when hungry, comforted when crying, held and touched gently, and kept warm and dry - they begin to trust the adults that care for them. This early sense of trust will help them develop positive relationships for the rest of their lives.

If adults handle a baby roughly or if they always seem anxious and irritated when they feed and diaper an infant, that child may learn that being with other people is not a pleasant experience. A basic sense of trust will not develop and the child may have difficulty relating to others.

## **PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Newborns usually cannot lift their heads. When on their stomachs, their heads will turn to one side. Although newborns cannot roll around, some infants may move their body the entire length of a crib by thrusting with their feet and legs. Because a baby cannot hold up his or her head, you must gently support the neck and head when you pick up or carry a baby.

A 3- to 4-month-old baby (remember these are average ages) will begin to look around more, prop up on the chest, and start to twist as he or she learns to roll from stomach to back and back to stomach. By about 4 to 5 months, the baby will try to grasp for an object, and watch his or her feet kick and move when placed on his or her back.

When you see a baby suddenly jump or twitch for no apparent reason, you are looking at the "startle" response. This is common in newborns and simply means that the nervous system is continuing to develop. Never shake a child or throw a baby playfully in the air because it could harm his or her nervous system.

As infants mature, they begin to explore and move by creeping, crawling, pulling themselves up, and walking. They practice their new physical skills when they grasp, touch, hit, roll, and grab objects.

## **COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT**

Infants use all their senses to learn about the world. They "talk" with others through actions and sounds, and experiment with objects and noises. They enjoy watching the results of their actions. This is how children learn, make sense of the world, and learn to communicate. When babies coo, babble, and interact with others, they are developing language skills.

Infants quickly begin to understand the meanings of symbols - that a smile and pleasant tone of voice mean the person speaking to them is happy, that dimming lights mean it is naptime, and that putting on a coat means a trip outside.

Infants think that when they cannot see someone or something, that it is gone forever. When important people in their lives leave, they do not understand that they will return.

## **SETTING LIMITS**

Infants are not born knowing right from wrong. They must learn by watching others and through trial and error. Once a baby begins moving around the house, he or she may find a world full of "no-no's." All children are naturally curious about the world around them. Without the desire to explore, children would learn very little. To keep this stage of childhood pleasant and safe it is important to provide a child-proof environment.

Make rules and limits appropriate for the age of the child. In other words, don't expect an infant to understand the meaning of everything you say or to be able to do everything you may want. Set limits that you're sure the child can understand. Use single words and a firm tone of voice. Give gentle reminders, and be understanding when the child forgets. This will let the child know, in a positive way, that you care about his or her behavior.

## **CRYING**

Normal physical development requires that babies cry. Crying helps improve the heart and lungs. The most important reason a baby cries is to tell you that he or she needs something. Most parents and caregivers quite naturally respond to these signals, feeding the baby, changing diapers, holding or cuddling the infant. Many parents and teachers wonder if picking up the baby right away will encourage crying for attention.

However, children will generally cry less when parents and caregivers respond to their signals in a sensitive way. A parent who reacts quickly helps to strengthen a sense of trust in the infant.

# **BUILDING BLOCKS OF INFANCY**

## **NEWBORN TO 2-MONTH-OLD**

- Looks at your face when you talk.
- Smiles back when you smile.

## **3- TO 4-MONTH-OLD**

- Smiles back at you me when you talk or gently touch his or her face.
- Makes sounds like "oooo" and "aaaaa."
- Watches you when you walk across the room.
- Jumps when there is a loud or sudden noise.
- Lifts his or her head and chest when lying on his or her stomach.
- Plays with his or her hands by touching them together.

## **5- TO 7-MONTH-OLD**

- Reaches out to be picked up.
- Laughs and babbles (saying babababa or dadadada).
- Turns his or her head and looks at you me when you talk.
- Rolls from tummy to back and from back to tummy.
- Turns his or her head toward sounds like the radio, TV, or voices.
- Reaches for and holds a toy.
- Learns about toys by putting them in his or her mouth.
- Sits up with the support of arms in front.

## **8- TO 10-MONTH-OLD**

- Plays "peek-a-boo" or waves bye-bye after seeing you do those actions.
- Understands the words "mama" and "dada."
- Scoots or crawls across the floor on his or her tummy.
- Holds something in each hand at the same time.
- Stands while holding onto furniture.

## **11- TO 12-MONTH-OLD**

- Gives you a toy when you ask for it.
  - Shakes his or her head "no."
  - Looks at the right thing when you say words like "bottle" or "ball."
  - Pulls up to standing by holding onto furniture.
  - Can find a small toy when it is hidden.
  - Says "mama" or "dada" to the right person.
- Picks up small things (like cereal) using thumb and forefinger.